

## The Third Floor

My friend Mark and I love exploring abandonments. We've been doing it for years, and I'm telling you, it never gets old. The constant creepy feeling, finding new areas, guessing at the history - it's almost addicting. From the first time we did it, we were hooked. Still, you can only explore houses for so long before you have to move on to something bigger, and that's what led us to what happened last year.

There was this huge abandoned hospital near us, just a few towns over. We'd never seen it ourselves, but knew that it had been abandoned for several decades, having closed down in favor a smaller, more modern one. Mark shot me down the first few times I suggested it, since he was worried about getting caught by the police. Eventually I was able to convince him though, pointing out that they'd probably just tell us to leave.

It was around 7:30 PM when we left, but it was summer, so the sun was still up. On the way there, we went over the plan one more time. The hospital was pretty isolated, and the area around it was overgrown. The idea was to drive to a parking lot about a quarter mile away. From there, we'd sneak through the bushes, and by the time we got there, it would be dark enough to walk across that last paved stretch to the front doors unseen.

When we got to the parking lot, we stood by the car for a few minutes. The road next to the lot went by the hospital, and we wanted to get an idea for the traffic (and, therefore, our chances of being seen). It seemed like our odds were pretty good: In the ten minutes we waited, only a single car went by.

Next, we checked our supplies. For each of us: a flashlight, a bottle of water, some disinfectant, a box of band-aids, and a cheap radio, for when we inevitably decided it would be creepier if we split up.

As I started for the trees, Mark tapped me on the shoulder.

"I almost forgot, I got this from the library earlier."

He reached into his backpack and retrieved a rolled up piece of paper.

"It's a map of the building, for the fire exits and stuff. You take it."

I asked, "Doesn't a map kind of defeat the purpose of exploring?"

"We'll only look at it if we have to. If one of us gets hurt, it would kind of suck to bleed to death looking for the exit."

"Alright, but why do I have to take it?"

"Because 'one of us' means me."

He had a point. In the years we'd been exploring, we'd had three total injuries. All of them were him. I put the map in my back pocket, and we started towards the hospital.

Just as planned, it was dark when we got there. Because of the surrounding trees, we couldn't make out a clear silhouette of the building against the sky. Shining our flashlights on it showed a brick exterior, and three floors. Most of the windows were broken.

The main entrance was wide open. One of the double-doors was on the ground nearby, with the other nowhere to be found. Most definitely, we were not the first people to check it out, which was expected. I don't think we've ever had to break in ourselves.

In we went.

The place was in really bad shape. The floor was covered in dirt, and most of the doors had been kicked in. There were holes in most of the walls, indicating that thieves had taken the copper wiring. There was also loads of water damage. With all of this, do I even have to mention the graffiti?

The first floor was probably the most interesting. It had the cafeteria, staff room, and, by far most interestingly, the morgue. There was even a set of tools left behind. As a rule, we don't take things from abandonments, but at that time we really wanted to. We went up the stairs to the second floor.

There, most of doors were intact, and there was no graffiti. I guess the teenagers looking for trouble were too lazy to climb a set of stairs. The thieves had motivation though, and there were just as many holes in the wall as downstairs.

It was at this time that, as always, Mark wanted to split up. I tend to take my time, and he moves pretty quickly in comparison. I go for details, he aims to see everything. Because of this, I knew he'd end up far away from me. It was alright with me though, as I kind of liked the silence. The creepiness is a big part of what makes it fun, and if he didn't split us up, I probably would have.

The second floor was mostly just patient rooms. Beds and tables, nothing much. As I was exploring, I could hear Mark's footsteps upstairs. They'd go a distance, stop, I'd hear the faint sound of a door opening, and then I'd hear him move away. He really had gotten ahead.

I'd only explored about half of the floor, because I then came across a relatively large sitting room, which was in the middle of the building. It was actually pretty well illuminated by moonlight, thanks to the large window that made up one wall. Looking out, I could see the paved front area we had entered from.

I didn't really need the flashlight, so I turned it off. There was a coffee table in the center of the room, surrounded by four old sofas. I sat down at one of them for a water break. It was pretty creepy, just sitting there alone, everything bathed in a dull blue light. I kept seeing things out of the corner of my eye, but in that light, this was expected.

I was just putting my bottle away when I heard my radio

crackle.

Mark said, "Hey, I'm kind of lost here. Can you help me find you?"

I would have been annoyed at having to use the map, but after seeing things for a few minutes, I was kind of creeped out, and wanted to get back together.

"Alright," I asked, "what's the nearest room number?"

"I'm in room 308."

"Okay... you're in the East wing, third floor."

"Where do I go from here?"

"Walk so that the numbers are descending. There should be a staircase next to 301."

About two minutes went by. I was about to try talking to him again when he came back on.

"Okay, these stairs are blocked. Where are you?"

I answered, "I'm in a sitting area in the middle of the second floor. I take it you're next to 301 now?"

"Yes."

"Okay, now you'll want to move in ascending order then. There should be an employee staircase next to 349. That leads down here."

Across the hall from the sitting room, according to the map, was a staff lounge. This was where the stairs went.

After ten more minutes, I could hear Mark's footsteps above me. Once again, the radio crackled on.

"These stairs right here?"

"Yep, I can hear you above me."

As I listened to him walk off, I went to the door of the staff lounge. On the other side, I could hear Mark descending the steps and walking across the room. When he reached the door, the knob jiggled, but it was locked.

I yelled through the door to unlock it. Strangely, he answered through the radio, even though he was just on the other side.

"The lock is broken. You'll have to open it for me."

I really don't like damaging sites, but I was way too freaked to keep sitting there by myself while I lead him to another staircase. I backed up and got ready to kick the door down. Just as I was about to kick it, my cell phone rang. I practically jumped through the ceiling.

I answered the phone.

"What? Christ, you scared the crap out of me."

"And you've been scaring the crap out of me!"

It was Mark.

I asked, "What do you mean I've been scaring you?"

"You weren't answering your radio. I've been waiting outside for like 20 minutes, where are you?"

I went back to the sitting room and looked out the window. Sure enough, there he was on the pavement.

I said, "Okay, I'm on the second floor, the big window in the middle."

I saw him look around for a second.

He said, "Yeah. Yeah, I see you."

It was then that I heard a loud series of bangs. I ran into the hall. The staff room door was shaking with each hit. Whoever was on the other side was wailing on it, trying to get out. I turned around and tore out of there.

I met up with Mark outside, and without a word, we ran through the woods to the parking lot. We got in the car, and sped off towards his house.

When we got there, I told him what had happened. Then, he gave me his experience.

"When I went ahead of you to the other end of the second floor, I tried to go upstairs. It was blocked by debris, but I heard footsteps up there. I kept trying to get you on the radio to ask how you did it, but you weren't answering. I thought you were screwing with me, but I was creeped out. I waited for you outside, and eventually thought to try your phone."

I was thoroughly freaked, but he still had one last detail for me.

"There's one more thing," he said. "Remember when I called you, and you asked if I could see you? I did see you. But..."

He paused.

"I didn't want to say anything then, but I could swear I could see people in the third floor windows..."

